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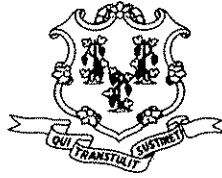
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State of Connecticut

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



**PERMANENT COMMISSION ON
THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

18-20 TRINITY STREET
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1628

(860) 240-8300

FAX: (860) 240-8314

Email: pcsw@cga.ct.gov

www.cga.ct.gov/PCSW

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**Written Testimony of
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Public Health Committee
Friday, February 29, 2008**

In Support of: SB 40, AAC Supportive Housing

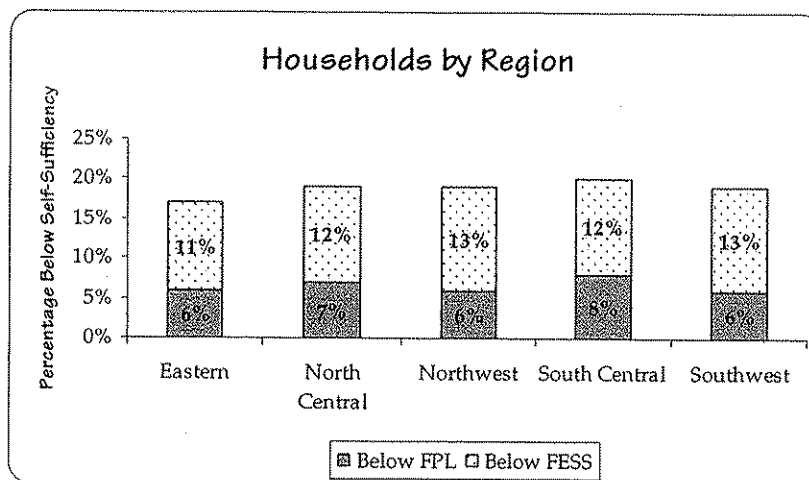
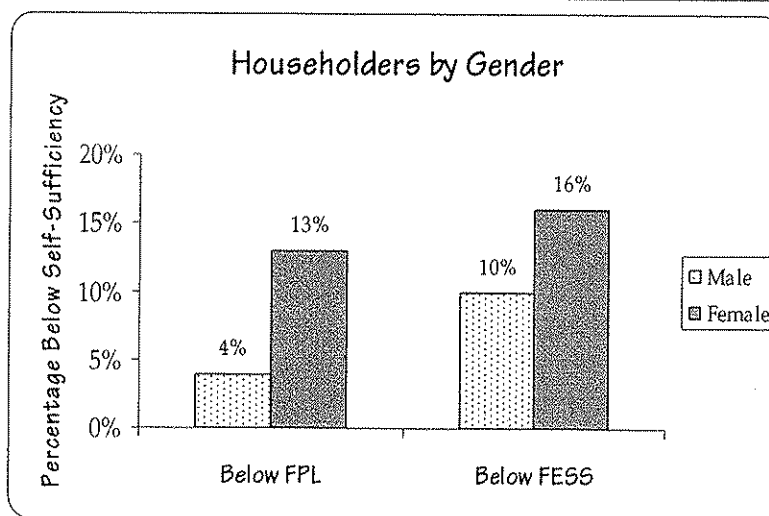
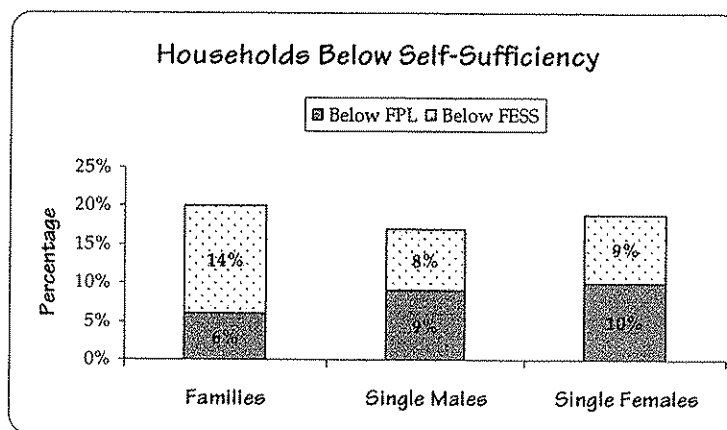
Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) in support of SB 40 which would provide funding for affordable housing and support services.

PCSW has focused its attention on the need for safe and affordable housing for women because it is a problem that all women are faced with, whether they are low- or middle-income, single or heads of households.

Twenty-percent of Connecticut working families do not have enough income to meet their basic costs of living based upon the family economic self-sufficiency standard (FESS).¹ Of the 20%, female head of households represent 29% vs. 14% of male head of households.²

¹ Diana M. Pearce, Ph.D. *Overlooked and Undercounted: Where Connecticut Stands*. Prepared for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, June 2007 – also source for self-sufficiency charts.

²Ibid.



This lack of self-sufficiency results in homelessness, inability to pay high rental costs, and the inability to keep up with mortgage payments. In FFY 2006, almost 1,300 families (1,293) sought shelter.³ Of those families, single females

³ Annual Homeless Shelter Demographic Report for FFY 2006. CT Department of Social Services via CT Coalition to End Homelessness accessed 2/07 at www.cceh.org.

headed 82%, single males headed 8%, and 10% were two-parent families.⁴ Additionally, over 10,000 single adults (10,116) sought shelter; of that population almost 25% (24.8%) were women.⁵ In the past year, we have received several calls from single women, who do not have substance abuse issues or dependent children, who cannot afford a place to live. When considering proposals, we urge you to look at this population as well.

We look forward to working with you to address these important issues. Thank you for your consideration.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Connecticut General Assembly
Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
18-20 Trinity Street ■ Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860.240.8300 ■ Fax: 860.240.8314
E-mail: pcsw@cga.ct.gov
Web address: www.cga.ct.gov/PCSW

Keeping Young Professional Women in the State of Connecticut

Connecticut has lost more 20-34 year olds since 1990 than any other state.¹ The shrinking labor pool of young professionals and families may deter business from coming, staying or expanding in the state. Over the next 10 years the baby boomer generation will hit retirement age and Connecticut will face a shortage of skilled, educated workers.

There are several ways the State of Connecticut can encourage young women professionals to stay and seek employment in the state, ranging from more affordable housing to providing job training in new emerging fields and supporting workplace friendly initiatives.

Young Women and Housing

Consumers in their 20s are more likely to purchase property at a younger age than their older family members. These individuals are not necessarily waiting for marriage or even a long-term relationship before becoming homeowners². Single females represent the fastest growing segment of the home buyers market. The proportion of single women buying homes has increased, from 14% in 1995 to 21% while the single men make up 9% of buyers.³

Many young people are deterred from staying in the State of Connecticut because of the high cost of housing. From 1995-2000, Connecticut lost over 6,000 young, single college educated persons. This means the State has spent time, energy and money on providing an educated workforce for other states.⁴

¹ HomeConnecticut.org.

² <http://www.floridahomeloan.com/2006/09/younger-first-time-home-buyers-enter.html>

³ <http://www.realtor.org/rmodaily.nsf/0/ec9b3798c397dc42862571ea00594a7c?OpenDocument>

⁴ HomeConnecticut.org

Recommendations

- Support the development of affordable housing, expand financial literacy programs, create incentives to save, improve access to mainstream financial services and improve affordability and equity of mortgage and insurance products.

Job Training and Educational Equality

As the state looks to build the workforce of nanotechnology, "green jobs", the film industry and other fields there is great potential to encourage young women to stay in the state by providing more job training for these new emerging fields.

For example, nanotechnology is a new field with great opportunity for the development of the younger workforce. Connecticut has shown a strong interest in this field. The president of the Connecticut Nanotechnology Initiative stated that, "Connecticut is well positioned to become a leader in Nanotechnology." In addition he states that many industries will be impacted by the development of nanotechnology including: biotech, pharmaceuticals, aeronautics, defense, transportation, environment and field cells.⁵ A viable workforce is necessary in order for Connecticut to substantially profit from nanotechnology.

Recommendations

- Strengthen gender equity in career and technical education, prioritize non-traditional [including Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)] training programs for women and expand career ladders initiatives.

Workplace Friendly Initiatives

Another important factor in young women's career choices is job quality. Without the availability of work supports such as paid sick days, women often lose pay for a sick child, and low-wage working women are the most likely to financially suffer.⁶ Jobs that provide paid sick days, paid family and medical leave and quality, affordable health insurance are much more attractive to young female workers. In addition, their loyalty to their company is significantly greater than if they were in a job without these work supports⁷.

Recommendations

- Ensure that workers have paid sick days they can use for themselves *and* their families, guarantee workers the right to paid vacation, increase access to health care through public insurance, and support paid family and medical leave initiatives.

⁵ <http://www.nanotech-now.com/CNI-release-10142003.htm>

⁶ The National Partnership for Women and Families

⁷ <http://www.paidleave.org/basics.html>